

Carpinteria Groundwater Sustainability Agency FAQ

What is groundwater?

Groundwater is the water found underground in the cracks and spaces in soil, sand, and rock. It is stored within and moves slowly through geologic formations of soil, sand, and rocks called aquifers. During a normal year, groundwater provides more than 35 percent of Southern California's drinking water. The effective use of local groundwater basins is an important component of our region's water supply plan.

Why do we need to manage groundwater?

Groundwater is an essential part of the local water supply portfolio, and a critical part of drought and emergency response. Prudent groundwater management will provide a safeguard against prolonged drought and climate change and contribute to a reliable source of water supplies for future generations. Lack of proactive management could result in failure of public and/or private water wells and jeopardize supply. The state Department of Water Resources ranked 127 basins in California as high or medium priority and, thus subject to the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act.



What is the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA)?

SGMA is the California Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA) that was enacted in 2014 and became effective January 1, 2015. SGMA is important because it requires the regulation of groundwater for the first time in California's history and provides new authority to local agencies to implement these requirements. The intent of SGMA is to strengthen local management of specified groundwater basins that are most critical to the state's water needs by regulating groundwater use.

The California Department of Water Resources and the State Water Resources Control Board (State Water Board) are the state agencies in charge of ensuring that SGMA is implemented. The State Water Board will take over groundwater management in high or medium priority basins if local agencies are unable or unwilling to implement the SGMA.

Is the Carpinteria Groundwater Basin impacted by the SGMA?

Yes. The State has identified the Carpinteria Groundwater Basin as "High Priority," which means compliance with the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act is required.

What is the Carpinteria Groundwater Sustainability Agency?

The Carpinteria Groundwater Sustainability Agency (CGSA) is a public agency formed by a Joint Powers Agreement between the [Carpinteria Valley Water District](#), [City of Carpinteria](#), [Santa Barbara County Water Agency](#) and [County of Ventura](#) to sustainably manage the groundwater in the Carpinteria Basin. The agency was formed in January 2020 in response to the SGMA requiring local and regional agencies to develop and implement sustainable groundwater management plans for high and medium priority basins.

What is the role of a Groundwater Sustainability Agency?

The primary purpose of a GSA under SGMA is to develop and implement a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) to achieve long-term groundwater sustainability. GSAs are empowered to utilize a number of new management tools to achieve the sustainability goal, such as implement projects including those related to data collection to understand basin characteristics and community needs, register and meter groundwater wells, mitigate against overdrafts, implement rules and regulations, and assess fees to support creation and implementation of a GSP.



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What does sustainable management mean?

Simply put, sustainable groundwater management means managing our water supply, while balancing the needs of our economy, environment and health and safety. Specifically, SGMA defines “sustainable groundwater management” as “...the management and use of groundwater in a manner that can be maintained during the planning and implementation horizon without causing undesirable results.”

Sustainable groundwater management under the SGMA singles out six “undesirable results” to be avoided:

- Chronic lowering of groundwater levels indicating a significant and unreasonable depletion of supply
- Significant and unreasonable reduction of groundwater storage
- Significant and unreasonable seawater intrusion
- Significant and unreasonable degradation of water quality
- Significant and unreasonable land subsidence
- Groundwater-related surface water depletions that have significant and unreasonable adverse impacts on beneficial uses of surface water

The consideration of what is “significant and unreasonable” is left for the local GSAs and stakeholders to decide.

What is a Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP)?

A Groundwater Sustainability Plan (GSP) is the state-mandated plan to sustainably manage groundwater. Each GSP will contain an assessment of each basin under past and future conditions, and will also include any necessary monitoring, management, enforcement, and other requirements to achieve sustainability

Who is involved in developing the GSP?

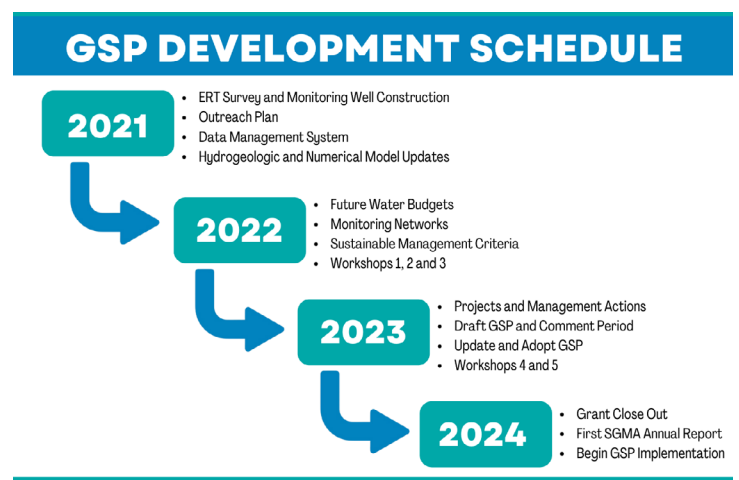
The GSA ultimately is responsible for developing the GSP, but SGMA is clear that GSAs must involve stakeholders in developing the GSP. The Carpinteria GSA maintains an interested parties list for the groundwater basin, and there are many opportunities for public participation and input from stakeholders as the GSP is developed. Stay connected to the process and provide input by signing up to receive news and announcements.

When do these regulations take effect?

SGMA took effect on January 1, 2015. Initially, the Carpinteria Groundwater Basin was designated as very low priority, but was re-designated as high priority in 2019 by the state Department of Water Resources (DWR). The change in priority occurred largely because errors in the data from the 2014 prioritization were corrected. The Carpinteria Groundwater Basin GSP is in development and will begin implementation in 2024. For more information about the Basin prioritization process, visit the California Department of Water Resources.

Is there a cost to SGMA? If so, who pays?

There are costs to develop a GSP, and possibly, to implement the changes in water use that may be required by SGMA. Evaluating and providing for these costs is among the responsibilities of the GSA. Due to its status of “High Priority,” the Carpinteria Basin qualified for grant funding to develop the GSP and for groundwater sustainability projects. A grant of \$1.9 million from the Department of Water Resources was awarded to the Carpinteria Valley Water District for GSP development and planning on behalf of the Carpinteria GSA. The grant will be used to complete the GSP and a new groundwater monitoring well. However, there are cost to operate and administer the Groundwater Sustainability Agency that are not covered by the State Grant. These costs include monitoring and groundwater levels, water quality and other hydrologic inputs as well as administrative costs.



Contact Information

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